

BAHRAIN

Issued by the "Bahrain Freedom Movement" to promote human and constitutional rights

The UN was wrong to honour a dictator and mass murderer

The people of Bahrain have been enraged by the decision by a UN committee to grant Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, Bahrain's despotic prime minister for the past 36 years, the prize of "human settlements". This step ran against the true feelings of most Bahrainis who have been at war with this man and his clique since 1975. Together with the British colonial officer, Ian Henderson, he has repeatedly been accused of overseeing policies of systematic torture that resulted in the death in custody of many people, and the maiming of others. Sheikh Khalifa is a living example of absolute dictatorship and cruelty, bound by nothing in his ruthlessness with his opponents. Between 1975 and 2001 he imposed draconian laws that turned the country into hell, with thousands of citizens imprisoned, tortured, maimed or killed. Hundreds more were forced to live in exile. He ruled with an iron fist, aided by his British aides and the notorious State Security Law and State Security Court. The black era continued unabated despite the cries of the victims and their families as the ruling family continued its policies of repression, extortion of people's wealth, expropriation of vast areas of the land and sea.

Furthermore, Sheikh Khalifa himself became one of most greedy rulers in the world. In addition to expropriating the oil revenues he put his hands on vast reclaimed sea lands, with all costs of reclamation paid for from public money. Most government contracts were given either to companies that he owned directly or through partners. He would impose payments on any company, internal or external, as a condition for gaining the contracts. He is known among the people as "Mr 50 percent" in reference to his corrupt business dealings. When he owned brick factories he ordered that pavements be covered with the bricks of his own factories. He sits on financial and business empires that are paralleled by no other ruler in the region. Sheikh Khalifa ran the country as his own private enterprise, tolerating no dissenting voices or business competition from anyone.

The UN step is believed to have come not through real conviction of his honesty and

management skills, but through corruption that seeps through the echelons of power within the international organisation. Over the past decade corruption has spread to UN agencies as repressive rulers sought to get certificates of good behaviour from these agencies. For example, the oil-for-food programme in Iraq was derailed as corrupt officials made fortunes either in business deals or through bribes from Saddam's regime. The US Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is now trying to assess the extent of corruption involved in the British arms deals with Saudi Arabia. BAe Systems, the main corporation involved in the Al Yamamah deal has been asked by the US MoJ to cooperate in exposing bank accounts used to facilitate payments of bribes to senior Saudi officials, such as Bandar bin Sultan, the former Saudi Ambassador in Washington.

On its part, the government of Bahrain led by Sheikh Khalifa was exposed in 1998 to have paid a small organisation run by one of the experts with the UN Human Rights Commission \$120,000 in return for not voting against Bahrain in relation to charges of arbitrary detention. It is now known that officials of several media and human rights organisations have been on the pay list of the Al Khalifa ruling family of Bahrain. Among them are reputable organisations in UK. In the absence of effective watchdogs corruption is becoming endemic in these organisations. Those organisations which are engaged in human rights work have avoided sanctioning Bahrain for ill-treatment of prisoners, and refused to issue statements against the indiscriminate attacks on freedom. Despite the efforts by Bahrainis human rights activists these organisations have remained silent on issues such as cultural genocide, arbitrary detention, torture, women and children. These organisations are not corrupt in themselves, but some of their officials have been bribed by government of Bahrain. Also, officials of some media bodies have been "neutralised" and no matter what crimes are committed by the rulers of Bahrain they will not

be reported, despite the abundance of information on these crimes.

It is within these contexts that the people of Bahrain have ridiculed the UN committee on human development for honouring a torturer, a thief and a criminal by the UN standards. It is a betrayal of those whose lives were abruptly and viciously ended by Sheikh Khalifa and his torture team, and thus a betrayal of the values and principles that are supposedly upheld by those organisations. In a country where tens of thousands of the youth had served, at one time or another, a period of arbitrary detention and possibly torture, how can the main person in charge of security be honoured in such audacious manner? What would the world community do if Saddam Hussain was honoured in this way? The people of Bahrain rank Khalifa bin Salman in the same position as Saddam and are thus shocked to hear this initiative that could only have been made by corrupt officials who received bribes from this corrupt regime.

We call on the United Nations to undertake an investigation into this in order to protect its reputation and long-standing in the field of human rights and the upholding of the rule of law in the world. The UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, is personally requested to call for an immediate investigation into this fiasco that has compromised the UN standing, especially that the Bahraini activists and the victims of the Al Khalifa will not rest until they see justice done to them. Sheikh Khalifa should have been arrested and tried for crimes against humanity.

The scars of his torture victims are still clearly visible, as well as the graves of those killed outside the judicial process. Arbitrary detention, torture and other forms of human degradation are still in force and the jails of Bahrain continue to receive pro-democracy activists en-masse. It is time that corruption within the international organisations be addressed and uprooted, to stop dictators, torturers and mass murderers being honoured in the way Khalifa bin Salman has been. Instead of honouring them, they should be tried for their crimes against innocent civilian population.

Massive rejection of a new “mugging” law, and reports of more abuses

Since the government decided to impose a 1 percent tax on all employees within what it calls “the Law of unemployment” there have been an outcry with a total rejection of the bill. The ruling family’s decision has only led to more polarisation in the political situation with the majority of Bahrainis rejecting what they view as an attempt to legalise robbing them of more money while the ruling family continues to expropriate more than 60 percent of the oil income. Over the past six years, Sheikh Hamad and his clique, including his son, have plundered more than three billion dollars annually from oil revenues, in addition to expropriation of vast areas of sea land. Protests have been organised and articles published in underground websites condemning this new form of legalised mugging. The ruling family will be forced to abandon this plan or risk more protests and further alienation by the people of Bahrain.

Meanwhile calls have been made for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners especially Younis Ahmad, 30, who has been languishing in the regime’s torture chambers for more

than four weeks. His main crime was the participation in a peaceful meeting calling for a modern constitution and democracy and ending the political naturalisation programme, which has become the cornerstone of Sheikh Hamad’s political programme. Mr Ahmad was arrested on 19th May during a vicious attack by the foreign-staffed riot police and death squads on the meeting and accompanying protest. Scores of heavily-armed mercenaries attacked the Bahrainis, causing them enormous injuries. He was beaten with rifles and batons and sustained horrific injuries to his head, eyes and back. Since then nothing has been heard of him.

The ruling family has given instructions to riot police and death squads to inflict maximum injuries on opponents and avoid large scale arrests. Torture is now being inflicted on Bahrainis in the streets in order not to give material evidence of administering torture on political prisoners. Another ploy is to hold those who had sustained serious injuries incommunicado for longer periods and not to release them until their wounds have become less serious and cannot be photographed.

On another level, the people of Malikiyya

decided to put a stop to the plundering of the Bahrain’s seashores. On 9th June, they marched towards the seashore in order to remove the illegal fish traps built along the coast. They had realised that a senior member of the Al Khalifa ruling family has decided to put his hand on a large areas of the sea, build the traps and then start reclaiming the sea land. That would have prevented the people of the village from having an easy access to the sea which has been one of the main sources of income to the poor families of the village. As soon as they started dismantling the traps, the death squads started shooting at them from inside the palace of the Al Khalifa usurper. They were subjected to horrific experience at the hands of the Al Khalifa thieves and their killers. At least 25 witnesses gave evidence with vivid details of their injuries resulting from the excessive use of rubber bullets. Feelings are running high as more seashores are expropriated by these thieves with the backing of Sheikh Hamad’s royal court, headed by the notorious sectarian figure, Khalid bin Ahmad Al Khalifa, the minister of the royal court.

BFM, 18th June 2007

Bahrain’s ranks low in US State Department Trafficking in Persons Report

Bahrain made no discernible progress in preventing trafficking this year. The government initiated no new campaigns to prevent trafficking, but continued to distribute multilingual brochures on workers’ rights and resources to incoming workers. The government should ensure that recruitment agencies and employers are aware of the rights of foreign workers to prevent their abuse BAHRAIN (Tier 3)

Bahrain is a destination country for men and women trafficked for the purposes of involuntary servitude and commercial sexual exploitation. Men and women from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, Ethiopia, and Eritrea migrate voluntarily to Bahrain to work as laborers or domestic servants, but some are subjected to conditions of involuntary servitude when forced to pay off large recruitment and transportation fees, and faced with the withholding of passports and other restrictions on their movement, non-payment of wages, threats, and physical or sexual abuse. Women from Thailand, Morocco, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia are trafficked to Bahrain for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation or forced labor. The Thai government reported repatriating 256 Thai women who had been deceived or forced into prostitution in Bahrain.

The Government of Bahrain does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so. Bahrain took the positive step of opening a shelter for female trafficking victims in November 2006, but failed to enact a comprehensive anti-trafficking law. The government also did not report any prosecutions or convictions for trafficking offenses during the year, despite reports of a substantial problem of involuntary servitude and sex trafficking. The government should enact a comprehensive anti-trafficking law that criminalizes all forms of trafficking in persons and assigns penalties both sufficiently stringent to deter the crime and adequately reflective of the heinous nature of the crime. Bahrain should also ensure that victims are not punished or deported for unlawful acts committed as a result of being trafficked, and should offer protective services to all victims of trafficking, including women coerced into prostitution and both female and male victims of forced labor. Prosecution

During the year, Bahrain made no discernible progress in criminally investigating and prosecuting trafficking crimes. Bahraini law does not prohibit all forms of trafficking, though its penal code of 1976 criminalizes forced prostitution through its Article 325 and forced labor through a 1993 amendment to its Article 302. Penal-

ties prescribed under Article 302 are up to two years’ imprisonment, which are not sufficiently stringent. Penalties for forced prostitution (Article 325), however, are from two to seven years’ imprisonment, which are sufficiently stringent. Despite indications that the trafficking problem in Bahrain is significant, the government did not provide evidence of prosecuting any cases of trafficking for involuntary servitude or forced prostitution. Laws against withholding workers’ passports - a common practice that restricts the mobility of migrant workers - were not effectively enforced, and the practice is widespread. A module devoted to trafficking was included in a training course for newly appointed public prosecutors. The government should significantly increase investigations and criminal prosecutions of labor traffickers, sex traffickers, and recruitment agencies complicit in trafficking.

Protection

Bahrain took some measures to protect trafficking victims over the past year. In November 2006, the government opened a shelter that offers medical, psychological and legal care, and is capable of accommodating at least 60 female victims of labor trafficking. Victims can only enter the facility by referral, however; to date, 14 victims have been assisted. Foreign victims of sex trafficking receive no protection from the government, but are

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Local and International pressure leads to release of Al-Khabaz and Hamid

The collective efforts, inside and outside Bahrain, have contributed to force the Bahraini authorities to release the youngmen Ali Saeed Yaqoob Al-Khabaz (22yrs) and Hameed Yaqoob Yousef (in his forties), from Sanabis village. They had been beaten and tortured before abduction and arrest since Sunday last May 20th. From Human perspective, many institutions inside Bahrain made considerable effort in the release, naming, the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights, the Bahrain Society for Liberties and Democracy, and last but not least, the Committee of Activists and Detainees of Conscience in Bahrain.

At the international level, Human Rights Watch and the UN working group, in Geneva, on Arbitrary Arrest, and Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances, have made significant efforts in the release of the two young men, as well as the plea made by Al-Khabaz's mother to the EU delegation which visited Bahrain recently.

On the grassroots level, the civil solidarity committee with Ali Al-khabaz and Hameed Youssef disclosed what happened to them, held sit-ins and drew international calls and appeals, as representatives of community organizations and many of the public speakers and dignitaries shed light on the arrest of two young men, demanding their immediate release.

At the time focused efforts contributed in the release of Ali Al-khabaza and Hameed Yousef after an arrest of 17days, a number of Bahraini youth are still behind bars. All of them have been exposed to harsh beatings, torture and inhuman treatment, before and during the interrogation in the detention centers, as the Public Prosecution issued orders of their incarcerations with various periods. The known detainees are:

From Tubli village: Sami Ahmed Muf-tah (27yrs), Mohammad Abdullah Ibrahim (17yrs), Sayed Mohammed Sayed Saeed (16 yrs). The Special Forces arrested them in Bilad Al-Qadeem after the completion of a memorial public event on Thursday May 16, 2007.

From Nuaim area: Hussein Abbas Nooh (twenties of age), Hussain Hassan Marhoon (20 yrs), Sayed Baqer Sayed Sadiq Abbar (19 yrs) and Sayed Alawi Sayed Hadi Abbar (19 yrs). They were arrested near King Faisal Corniche on Thursday May 16, 2007.

From Essa Town: Mahmood Issa Radhi was arrested in Nuwaidrat village on Friday, May 19 after security forces attacked a celebration of solidarity with the activists: Al-Mushaima and Al-khawajah held there.

From Karzakan village: Hussain Jassim Marhoon (28 yrs), was arrested at the entrance to the village of Demestan, heading for his home in Karzakan on Friday evening May 19.

From Karranah village: Hussain Abbas (25 yrs), who was arrested Thursday evening of May 18th after protest event in Nuaim

From Daih village: Yasseen Ali Ahmed Mushaima who was abducted from his car and arrested on the evening of Saturday, May 19 near the traffic lights leading to the village.

It should be noted that some names of young detainees have been spread, without any details to the time of writing this statement, including:

Younis Ahmed Khamees from the village of Nuwaidrat Aqeel Ahmad Mansoor from Daih village.

Bahrain's low ranking in peace nonsustainability

The Economist Intelligence Unit, (EIU), in conjunction with an international team of academics and peace experts, produced Global Peace Index (GPI), which ranks 121 nations according to their relative peacefulness.

www.visionofhumanity.com/index.php

The GPI is composed of 24 indicators, ranging from a nation's level of military expenditure to its relations with neighbouring countries and the level of respect for human rights. The index has been tested against a range of potential "drivers" or determinants of peace—including levels of democracy and transparency, education and material wellbeing. The study is based on the latest available figures (mainly 2004-06) from a wide range of respected sources, including the International Institute of Strategic Studies, The World Bank, various UN offices and Peace Institutes and the Economist Intelligence Unit.

The team produced the results of the analysis into each of the 121 nation's peace in a table, the Global Peace Index section, in which countries are ranked from most peaceful to least peaceful, highlighting their ranking as well as their score.

www.visionofhumanity.com/rankings/. Click on a country to see the detail of its peace indicators and drivers.

While Norway was found the most peaceful country with a rank of 1, Iraq was ranked the worst in peace sustainability at the bottom of the scale at 121. Bahrain was ranked 62 out of 121 showing great tendency for political instability and vulnerability for peace non-sustainability. www.visionofhumanity.com/rankings/show_country/7

On the other hand, there is grave concern for the lives and health of:

Mahmoud Hassan Saleh from Daih village who was detained during protests on last March 29 after being subjected, in public, to bloody and brutal beating by members of the Special Forces. Two days after his arrest with eyes covered, he was accompanied by members of the Criminal Investigations Department and heavily guarded security forces to small meadow, locally known by "Abdulrasool's" in the region between Sanabis and Daih. Mahmood was allowed to enter the meadow with photographers of the Ministry of Interior, which was filming a video camera each course event.

Ali Ahmed Salim (19 years) - from "Hellat Abdelsaleh" village- who was arrested on the morning of Monday, April 2nd, from his work place which was besieged by heavily armed special forces.

On the other hand, the Bahraini Authorities issued a sentence of one year imprisonment on the youths:

Jaafar Salman Yousef (23 yrs) from Karanah village, who was arrested on Thursday evening, February 15th, 2007 in Bani Jamrah village

Radhi Ali Radhi (22 yrs) from Abu Saiba village, who was arrested on Friday evening February 16th, 2007.

The arrest and imprisonment of two young men were carried out in the background of protests in Bani Jamrah, calling for the release of other detainees.

The Committee of Activists and the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights call the Bahraini Authorities to close the file of arrests and detention of the peaceful protest activities and accept to deal in civilized manner with acts of popular activities. These activities are characterized by being peaceful until being attacked by security forces to click fierce clashes between protesters and security forces, which started on the methodology of collective punishment to areas near or where these activities were held. The Committee and the Society also call for the Authorities to stop all methods of excessive force and collective punishment as well as bring those responsible for torture and inhumane treatment of detainees to trial, so that they become an example to others. Furthermore, the Committee and the Society appeal to human rights organizations and international institutions – particularly High Commission for Human Rights working groups on Torture, Arbitrary Detention, Forced and Involuntary Disappearances to work for the release of all of those detained and disappeared in Bahraini prisons

Committee of Solidarity with Activists and Detainees of Conscience in Bahrain

Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights
June 7th, 2007

HRW's letter to the ruler: Respect human rights

May 31, 2007

His Majesty Shaikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa

Your Highness:

We write to you with regard to the detention and alleged severe beating of Mr. Ali

Yusif Ahmad and Mr. Hassan Yusif Hamid and other abuses allegedly committed by Anti-Riot Police or other security forces on Monday, May 21, in Sanabis.

On Friday, May 25, we wrote privately to Shaikh Rashid, the Minister of Interior, requesting information about the case of Mr. al-Khabaz. For more than a week following his detention, his family had been unable to contact him or even to learn his whereabouts. We have received no response or information from the ministry or any other office of the government.

According to our information, Anti-Riot Police detained Mr. al-Khabaz, 22 years old, in Sanabis, on Monday, May 21, when the police dispersed a gathering of people who were protesting a police action the previous evening. According to his family, Mr. al-Khabaz was not among the protestors, but had been in the vicinity visiting his grandfather, Hasan Abdullah Hubail, whose house is adjacent to the site of the protest.

According to the family, the next day, Tuesday, they attempted without success to locate Mr. al-Khabaz at the military hospital and at the Central Market (Nu'aimi) police station. Military hospital personnel told them that no one by that name had been admitted. Police officials refused to respond to their request for information, and called a unit of the Anti-Riot Police to disperse the family and acquaintances, who then numbered around 20, from the station. Witnesses told the family and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR) that the riot police severely beat Mr. al-Khabaz at the site of the protest and subsequently. Several days later, a person with access to Mr. al-Khabaz's place of detention provided the BCHR with a full-face photo of Mr. al-Khabaz indicating severe swelling and bruising of his face and head. It was at this point that we initially wrote to Shaikh Rashid inquiring about Mr. al-Khabaz's well-being and whereabouts.

On May 29, more than a week after Mr. Khabaz was beaten and detained, Ministry of Interior officials informed his family that he was in the military hospital, and allowed family members to visit him. However, hospital officials refused the family's request to provide them with a report on the injuries he sustained. On Wednesday, May 30, ministry officials prohibited any further visits to the hospital, and at 12:30 a.m. this morning, May 31, the authorities removed him and Hamid

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Yusif Ahmad, another man beaten and detained during the May 21 incident, from the hospital. We understand that this evening Mr. Khabaz called his family to inform them that he was at the Manama police station.

According to a May 30 report in the Bahraini daily Al-Wasat, an unnamed Ministry of Interior official "clarified" that during the police action on May 21 "al-Khabaz fell to the ground resulting in injuries to his face." The official also said that al-Khabaz "resisted arrest" and suffered injuries from stones demonstrators threw at the police. He said that the police had not treated Mr. al-Khabaz inhumanely.

Hamid Yusif Ahmad, 46 years old, also suffered serious injuries as a result of beating he sustained during or subsequent to the May 21 incident in Sanabis, suffering a broken jaw and a broken tooth. Mr. Ahmad, while in the military hospital, told the BCHR that security forces took him and Mr. al-Khabaz first to the Sanabis graveyard and then to the Exhibition Center roundabout, near Sanabis, where the police subjected them to additional beatings. Mr. Ahmad's account, coupled with the nature of the injuries to him and Mr. al-Khabaz, amount to allegations that the Anti-Riot Police engaged in torture and inhumane treatment.

Such acts, if true, constitute clear violations of international human rights law. The UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials calls upon those who exercise police powers to protect "all persons against illegal acts" and, in performance of their duty, to "respect and protect human dignity and maintain and uphold the human rights of all persons." According to Article 3 of the Code of Conduct, "law enforcement officials may use force only when strictly necessary and to the extent required for the performance of their duty." The Code of Conduct further states that "no law enforcement official may inflict, instigate or tolerate any act of torture or any other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

Your Highness, these allegations of abuse by the Anti-Riot Police are extremely serious and require your immediate attention. We regret that the Ministry of Interior has been unresponsive to our earlier request for information. We respectfully urge you to move without delay to establish an independent counsel or commission to investigate the allegations of severe beatings, possibly amounting to torture, by the Anti-Riot Police and/or other security forces during the events in Sanabis on May 21 that led to the detention of Ali Sa'id Khabaz and Hassan Yusif Hamid. This independent body should:

Be under the direction of a person independent of the interior ministry or other security-related government agencies, and well-known for integrity and impartiality;

Be provided with the financial and other resources to accomplish its mandate in a timely manner, including the power to compel the testimony of Ministry of Interior, Anti-Riot Police and other police officials and provision of official documents from those offices.

Make its findings and recommendations public;

Make recommendations concerning the discipline or criminal prosecution of any persons believed to be responsible for violations of Bahraini law or international human rights law in connection with the March 21 incidents in Sanabis.

We also request that your government make public any criminal charges or any other legal basis for the initial and continued detention of Mr. al-Khabaz and Mr. Hamid. If they are being held for any recognizable criminal offense, they should be charged before a court of law and have access to legal counsel of their choosing as well as to their immediate family.

We thank you for your urgent attention to this important matter, and welcome your response.

Sincerely,

Sarah Leah Whitson, Executive Director
Middle East and North Africa division

Bahrain's ranks low, *Cont from P3*

directly processed for deportation. Local NGOs supporting trafficking victims in informal shelters did not receive any government funding. The government has not instituted a formal victim identification procedure to identify victims among vulnerable groups, such as runaway domestic workers or women arrested for prostitution. As a result, some victims are detained and deported without adequate protection. The government does not encourage victims to assist in the prosecution of their traffickers. The government should institute formal victim identification procedures, allow victims to refer themselves to the shelter, and also permit victims of sex trafficking access to the facility for protection.

Prevention

Bahrain made no discernible progress in preventing trafficking this year. The government initiated no new campaigns to prevent trafficking, but continued to distribute multilingual brochures on workers' rights and resources to incoming workers. The government should ensure that recruitment agencies and employers are aware of the rights of foreign workers to prevent their abuse